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Mr. Noyes's Oration.

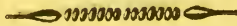


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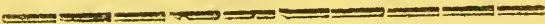
ORATION,

DELIVERED IN BRATTLEBOROUGH.

JULY 4th—1811.



By John Noyes, Esq.



BRATTLEBOROUGH :

PRINTED BY WILLIAM FESSENDEN.

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1811.

Brattleborough, July 4, 1811.

SIR,

There being a general wish for the publication of your Oration, delivered this day, the Committee of arrangements have authorized us to solicit a copy for the press—Your compliance with our request, in this particular, will oblige both the public, and

Your humble servants,

JOHN STEWARD, } *For Committee of*
SAMUEL ELLIOT, } *Arrangement.*

JOHN NOYES, Esq.

Brattleborough, July 5, 1811.

GENTLEMEN,

I have herewith sent you a copy of my Oration, without any apology. If its publication is thought to be of any use, you are at liberty to publish it.

Your most obedient servant,

JOHN NOYES.

JOHN STEWARD, } Esqrs.
SAMUEL ELLIOT, }

AN ORATION.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

ALMOST all nations have had their public festivals. To celebrate some extraordinary dispensation of PROVIDENCE, or commemorate some great national event, seems to have been congenial to the feelings of human nature. For these purposes particular days were consecrated as sacred, and in ruder and more superstitious times, the solemnities of an anniversary were blended with the rites of Religion. Ideas and sentiments, which were highly interesting in a political view, whole communities were eager to cherish and perpetuate, and the human mind felt a delicate and dignified pleasure, in associating, in some *Grove or Temple*, to chaunt the war song, to eulogize the Hero and the Sage, and to animate to love of country, and the adoration of the *Gods*.

But what was ever more interesting to any people, than is to us, the American Independence? Or what political era more memorable than the Fourth of July, Seventeen Hundred and Seventy Six?

On that eventful day were laid the foundations of an Empire. By a solemn and splendid act of the representatives of the nation, a whole people were emancipated from every control, but a self-government of laws. And in this highly favoured land the irksome chains of superstition and usurped prerogative, which, in a greater or less degree, had fast bound in thralldom the whole human family, were burst asunder, and the American Citizen was left free to think, to act, and to enjoy.

In the moment of traversing the historic pages of the crisis, the soul, impressed by a transaction so august and sublime, is instantly wafted to regions above its ordinary flights, and while it delights to dwell on the scene in retrospect, it hails the returning Anniversary as the jubilee of the nation, to be kept by unborn millions for ages yet to come. Other great events, such as the downfall of empires and the overthrow of mighty armies, dwindle, no less in the comparison, than they are disgusting in their nature. These are calculated to affect the mind, with little else than consternation and terror; but, that, the *Wise and Good*, the *Philosopher* and *Philanthropist* of every country could not but view with astonishment, admiration, and delight: And the fears they long had entertained for the fate and for the happiness of man were lost in exalted hopes, for they seem to see, through the darkness of the political deep, a world of order, springing from chaos, and, as it was at the birth of time, they sang together and shouted aloud for joy.

Come, then, let us participate the joy and the noble sentiments, naturally excited by a review of the occasion. The memory of the American *Independence* can never be lost, nor the monuments, reared by the revolution, defaced by lapse of time, and the lamp of our country's patriotism should never cease to burn.

While we, this day, draw around the altar of *Freedom*, and call up the recollection of the signal favours of PROVIDENCE, and the great achievements which accompanied the struggle for independence, may our bosoms overflow with grateful sensations to the munificent *Author* of all blessings, and to those *Patriots* and *Warriors*, by whose toils, sufferings, and deaths, were intended to be secured to us, and to posterity, the rights and privileges of Freemen. Such distinguished acts of beneficence, and such precious

sacrifices, call for all our gratitude: And the invaluable boon, realized in a long series of past prosperity, and in the yet hopeful prospects of our beloved country, demands our rejoicing.

But, in the midst of "spontaneous mirth" and "high pinioned joys," let us not be unmindful that we should rejoice with soberness and trembling. Thoughtless exultations belong not to man. For if prosperous days have been multiplied to him, so also the days of his adversity may be many.

All things beneath the sun are permanent in nothing, but vicissitude. This is the peculiar characteristic of all human projects. They can never have the stamp of perfection, for they are the work of an imperfect hand, and they must be precarious, because their author is perishable.

The strongest foundations, and the loftiest pillars are often the mere sport of accident. Kingdoms and Empires pass away, leaving nought behind, for the contemplation of the historian and moralist, but a long concatenation of causes and effects, and the floating fragments of the mighty wrecks. Our own excellent systems of government, those monuments of human wisdom, and alike the Freeman's pride and the Patriot's boast, and even the Independence of our country, that which we all so highly prize, and for which a WASHINGTON toiled, and many Heroes bled—all, all may perish, and be lost forever!

Far be it from us to damp the joys of the present occasion, by fearful forebodings. Sufficient for the day should be the evils thereof. But, the "signs of the times" are alarming. Ours is an age of no common complexion. Disrobed of its milder aspects, it has assumed the ghastly visage of desolations and ruins. The terrible revolutions of falling

States and Empires, which, in other times, would have figured in centuries of history, are, of late, crowded into a space of days ; and each succeeding event seems but a premonition of new catastrophes, still more frightful than the former.

When we turn to the political deep, and look off, upon the floods, the boldest courage is dismayed at the prospect. The whole horizon lowers and frowns ; and all is night, and tempest, and wild confusion. " Wrecks are seen on every billow, and the ear is assailed with the cries of distress, and the shrieks of despair mingled with the howlings of the storm."

The all-inundating deluge of *French Revolution* has already spread wide its horrors. It seems fast covering the face of the whole world, and high raising itself over the lofty mountains and hills ; and one strong nation after another, has been plunged beneath the desolating element. What portentous admonitions these, even to these United States : " Be ye also ready !"

If ever the awful day should come, when the yet surviving powers of Europe, and the eastern world, shall be engulfed, in the mighty deluge : Shall we not be alarmed for the fate of our political Ark ? If now, when launched but a little way, and only on the borders of the wave, it is well nigh foundered by the whirls of the eddies and the surges of the currents, should unskilful pilots or adverse fates urge to the midst of the tremendous deep, what refuge shall be sought, or what Ararat could be found as a resting place of safety ? Surely the crisis is dreadful, even in imagination only—and may *Heaven*, in great mercy, avert it from us.

But, let us forbear to magnify dangers, or disparage a just confidence in the safety of our coun-

try. The present great convulsions of the nations are within the control of an *Overruling Providence*. His designs may be inscrutable, but his bow is in the cloud; and whatever shall be the aspect of things, of our republic, we must never despair. It is now the last and only surviving one on the face of the earth. It stands a solitary monument—a distant beacon, and a rallying point to oppressed humanity, when in other, and more propitious times, the *Genius* of Liberty shall resuscitate a general flame, and emancipate the world.

Let us then dispel our fears. Hope is a sweet companion, without which, life itself would lose almost all its charms: And what is innocent in principle, and in its effects it is a duty to indulge. Let us participate the delightful pleasure of hoping and believing, that whatever disasters other nations may be destined to suffer, ours will escape every calamity and survive the general wreck—That our government, our liberties, and our excellent institutions will all be preserved and remain lasting blessings to us and to posterity. But never can we reasonably hope, nor expect, that all this will be the effect of chance. Such great salvation will be the result of suitable means on the part of our citizens. It will depend on great wisdom and virtue, and a general diffusion of knowledge. These are the grand pillars, the only vital principle of a republican system of government, and without which it cannot long endure.

The fact, however, will not be denied, that multitudes of other systems, where these qualities were rare, indeed, have nevertheless prolonged an existence for ages. But, let it be remembered, that those governments differed essentially from ours, in their nature and forms, and in the principles of support on which they relied.

Wherever the human mind acquires an artificial elevation by chivalrous ideas and sentiments, or is sunk below its level by ignorance and superstition, obedience is the result of false principles of honour, or of a mere brutal fervility. And if, in connection with such influences on the passions of men, be added the mighty machinery of the military power, to strike terror and awe, the thrones of the Neros and Napoleons, of every age, are fixed on a durable basis, scarcely liable to be overturned by domestic violence, and generally continuing, until a weaker is overwhelmed by the power of a stronger.

How very different are the principles and motives which are necessary to the support of a republican government? Such a political system, growing out of general consent, and deriving all its energies from public opinion disdains both the use and the influence of superstition and ignorance—the pageant decorations of Majesty, and the glittering array of arms, to give strength to its frame, or activity to its functions. These appendages are noxious accompaniments, like deformities and morbid affections in the human body, never beneficial, and always destructive to its health and vigour. But, having its origin in reason and the nature of man, and instituted solely for the public weal, a genuine republic finds the cement of its basis, and its strong ligatures, in enlightened understandings and moral dispositions. Here are lodged the *stamina* of the system, and the bones and sinews of its strength; and could these be preserved they would give perpetuity to its duration.

The calamities to which all other governments are liable from without, may be common to this. It may be menaced and assailed with the scourges of foreign war, and have to meet, in arms, whole hosts of myrmidons and conscripts; but infinitely less would be the danger from these, than from a gene-

ral prevalence of ignorance and corruption of morals. These are the breach in the walls, exposing to every attack—The great flood-gate, through which, insidiously enter, *inordinate ambition, party spirit, discord and treason*—the fatal gangrenes of all republics.

To causes like these may be traced the downfall of the ancient systems of Greece and Rome. So long as the great body of their citizens continued to be sober, wise and virtuous, those governments excelled in prosperity and strength; and the lustre of their fame was brightened no less by their works of genius than by the prowess of their arms. But when a declension in morals let loose the wicked and boisterous passions, credulity, always the natural offspring of ignorance, gave opportunities to *demagogues* to deceive and mislead the people in the great concerns of the State, the foundations of the republics were undermined, and their fall was inevitable. The admonitions and exertions of only a few wise and virtuous citizens could not save them from destruction—because the people themselves, at length, become profligate in sentiments and conduct, and stupid as to their true interests, would not be dissuaded from listening to the sinister and delusive vagaries of self-styled patriots, instead of correct political principles, and from preferring the gratification of their sordid passions to the good of their country.

How monitory the lesson to be drawn from those celebrated nations, and, if properly considered, will it not produce serious and gloomy apprehensions in us, and in all our citizens?

The American Republic, at present, is threatened with great mischief, if not ruin, from the same sources we have described; and the dangers to which it is exposed, are no less now, than in the days of the ancient republics, but greatly augment-

ed by circumstances peculiar to the times in which we live. There has, of late, gone forth into the world, a spirit, extraordinary in the subtilty and activity of its power, and a *sui generis* in kind. Its very nature is to pluck up and to ruin—to revolutionize and destroy. And the wayward and perverse dispositions of men, not satisfied with their own strong natural propensities to misrule and disorder, have taken into their service this new and foreign aid, as if to make depravity itself still more depraved.

In that country where were seen the first footsteps of its marches, it proved to be the *Bobon Upas* to all that is great and good, in principle and in practice. The consolations of religion and virtue, and the wise and immemorial maxims of morals and politics expired by its poison. It went far in revolutionizing the nature of man, by stripping it, of all its amiable qualities, and leaving nothing behind but a savage heart and brutal propensities. With the honied words of *Liberty and Equality* on its lips, it rivetted anew and made stronger the shackles of slavery—mixed a keener poignancy in the already bitter cup of suffering humanity, and, to use the language of a humane and feeling writer, “left its deluded victims to enjoy no other than the liberties of hell.”

Such are some of the features of the character of this great *Apollyon*, who did more in subjugating and ruining the ill-fated governments of Europe, than all the armies of the *terrible nation*, and who has, long since, perched upon our shores, shedding forth its baleful influences, and carrying on its lethiferous work. The effects of its labours are seen, in the opinions, the dispositions and the conduct of multitudes of our citizens, and even in the great councils of our country. Men are made to regard

perversity of principle, and obliquity of sentiment as the fairest passports to reputation and suffrage—to assume for argument, propositions palpably absurd and contradictory—to fear dangers, that no where exist, “and to see what never can be seen.”

To change, to new-model, and to pull down every thing, venerable by age or sanctioned by time, is the order of the day with its votaries. The sacred dictates of inspiration are rules of life too old or too rigid for the *refined philosophy* of the day.—Hence, blow after blow has been struck at the institutions of religion and morals, and thus, through them, at the only foundations of civil society. By the instigations of this *spirit*, the politics of our country have been metamorphosed into a new and extraordinary kind of beings—disdaining to travel the old, and well-beaten paths of wisdom and experience, they are perched upon the *aerial car of the balloon*, without a compass or star for a guide, or a chart by which to direct their course; and while aiming to injure fancied or pretended enemies, they have committed suicide upon themselves, and destroyed the prosperity of the nation.—And even now, this same malignant *demon* seems to be in the last act of preparing to immolate the peace, the liberty, and the independence of our country upon its own unhallowed altars, and then to triumph over the ruins, and the horrors it has produced.

What American Hercules shall arise to slay the hideous monster? or what antidote can be found for the poison of its stings?

Wisdom and virtue in all-consoling accents reply, Your safety is in us—In us there is more than Herculean strength—In us there is a panacea for your maladies, and a “*balm for all your wounds.*”

By controlling and subduing the unruly passions, and giving light to the understandings of men, we transform the rude, the ignorant, the vicious and the vile, into well-informed, quiet, and peaceable citizens. Hence the all-destroying blasts of ambition, and party animosity cease. Vice and ignorance are no where to be seen. Talents and merit ascend to their stations in the private circles of society, and in the public councils of the nation. And thus the government itself being free from every evil and danger from within, digs deep its foundations, makes strong its pillars, and places its munitions in the rocks.

Go then, my friends, and in the secret places of your retirements, commune with your own hearts, and be wise. Suffer no bitterness of party rancour nor pertinacity of will to blind you, as to the true and solid interests of society. Banish from your breasts the ragings of ambition, and that inordinate love of self and power which frequently make men swerve from the straight path of duty : And, as you value your country—the birth-place of your fathers, your own, and the future residence of your offspring : As you prize its independence, its government, and its invaluable institutions—and as you regard the welfare, and the happiness of yourselves and your children ... So let your care and endeavours be to inculcate wisdom and virtue. Take fast hold of their instructions, and listen to their precepts. Practise them, yourselves, on all occasions and in every situation. Teach them to your children, your neighbours, and to all around you, and if you have shared liberally in the gifts of fortune, be not backward in aiding those establishments and institutions, which are calculated to improve the religion, the morals, the virtue and the knowledge of our citizens. Do these things and you will yet save your country, prolong its prosperity and hap-

pinels, and receive the benedictions of all posterity. Do these things with proper views and motives, and you will have discharged an important duty to yourselves, and to that BEING, in whose hands are the destinies of all nations and empires, whose *Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and whose dominion is forever and ever.*



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